

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATE: JULY 4th 2017

REPORT TO: STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

PURPOSE: UPDATE ON NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW

Background

Professor Donaldson report and recommendations in *Successful Futures was that*

Religious education should form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception.

In October 2015 'A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life' document outlined the plan for taking forward Professor Donaldson's recommendations

The timeline and process has been as follows:

Step 1: Representatives to attend induction events.

Step 2: Representatives from the pioneer schools will work within areas of learning and experience (ALE) in order to consider the 'big questions' of curriculum development, e.g. what is the scope of each ALE? What are the connections between ALEs?

Step 3: Representatives from the pioneer schools will consider the strands within each area of learning and experience.

Manon Jones is responsible for the pioneer schools and two areas of learning and experience (ALE), Humanities and Language and Literacy.

Meetings with Welsh Government Spring Term 2017 - Update

2/3/17 – WASACRE meeting with Cabinet Secretary Kirsty Williams

Executive members met with the Minister, Kirsty Williams. The status of the Agreed Syllabus was discussed and reference made to schools who may not be meeting statutory requirements. The Minister asked for evidence that schools are not complying with statutory requirements. The Minister stated that schools should be meeting higher standards and was adamant, therefore, that all schools must follow the Agreed Syllabus. If they did not they could not meet those required standards.

27/3/17 – RE Planning Meeting with Welsh Government Officials

Welsh Government representatives plus Edward Evans, Vicky Thomas (WASACRE) Mary Parry, Paula Webber (NApFRE) Michelle Gosney Estyn

Item: Relationship between the locally agreed syllabus, the statutory requirements and the new curriculum framework

A brief background into agreed syllabus development was provided and reference made to problems that have arisen in the past with the Foundation Phase document. Agreed syllabuses and SACREs would still have a role to play with WG enquiring about the time frame and process for an agreed syllabus Conference.

Action

- WG to investigate what happened with the Foundation Phase during the last curriculum review in order to try to avoid the same thing happening this time.

Item: Working together to develop the RE aspect of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience

A draft timeline for the development of the AOLEs was provided by MJ. It was agreed that greater involvement was necessary with SACREs and WASACRE in the development of the new curriculum.

Action

- 2-3 representatives from NAPfRE/WASACRE to attend Pioneer group workshop on 2nd and 3rd May to contribute to discussions about the group's proposals regarding the scope and structure of the Humanities from an RE perspective. (MP, GV, BJ)
- WG to explore the commissioning of a short paper from NAPfRE/WASACRE in relation to the key concepts within Religious Education to assist with the curriculum development work.
- WG would like WASACRE and NAPfRE to share meeting dates for 2017-2018 so that a timeline for regular meetings can be put in place.
- Curriculum developments will be shared via a newsletter to SACREs which will be sent from WG to SACRE clerks. SACREs will be able to then respond to the Newsletter by email to Manon Jones. Paula Webber as Secretary to WASACRE is to be copied into responses.

Item: Matters to consider which may impact the curriculum reform process

• RE for Nursery children

Would legislation be amended as currently RE was statutory from reception onwards, whereas Successful Futures covers the age range from 3 to 16/ It was confirmed that Welsh Government had not yet legislated on this area and that there was not to be a separate case for RE.

• Post 16 Religious Education

It was agreed that the issue of delivery at Post 16 required further consideration and discussion.

• Managing withdrawal from RE

Reference was made to issues surrounding withdrawal (for example parents partially withdrawing their children from RE – lack of clarity for parents on the content of RE) and that there was the need to clearly identify RE within the new curriculum framework. It was agreed that the WASACRE paper on withdrawal from RE to be shared with WG and that RE would need to be clearly identified in the new curriculum framework to allow learners to be withdrawn.

• Relationship between the new curriculum framework and qualifications

Concerns were raised that the new Religious Studies GCSE appeared to be at odds with the proposals contained within Successful Futures. This has been raised by WASACRE with Qualifications Wales but there has been no response received. Discussion arose around the feasibility to introduce another qualification (similar to the current 'spec B' short course in RS) so that statutory RE at Key Stage 4 could be accredited.

Welsh government confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary's view on this area was quite clear that the nature and content of qualifications was in the hands of the Qualifications Wales as the regulator in Wales. The lack of response from Qualifications Wales to the correspondence from WASACRE would be followed up. Also it was confirmed that Welsh Government were working with Qualifications Wales during the curriculum development process to ensure that future qualifications align with the new curriculum. .

Next Steps

Date of the next meeting 17th July 2017

12/4/17 - Stakeholders meeting

Stakeholders raised some issues for discussion e.g. whether there would be a change of name for RE - There was no answer given to this question as no decisions have been made; consideration should be given to consistency of approach between the different AOLE groups: issues of progression from KS3 to KS4.

2/5/17 – AOLE Planning Meeting (MP& BJ attended)

Purpose of meeting

- Agree on a 'statement' showing how the ALE promotes the 4 purposes
- Outline the compass of the ALE – not only Geography, History and RE
- Discuss the best way of presenting the range of subjects
- Discuss the level of detail that should be included for the ALE
- Prepare a report that can be presented to a Curriculum Panel (chaired by Prof GD) on behalf of the ALE on 23.05.17

Background reading:

Other curricula:

References were made during the day to the background reading undertaken by members of the Humanities ALE group. Members mentioned that they have explored the curriculum documents of: Scotland, New Zealand, British Columbia, Singapore.

Working with Big Ideas in Science Education (ed. Wynne Harlen et al).

It was suggested that the various disciplines within the Humanities ALE should identify the Big Ideas that are pertinent to each discipline.

Curriculum for Excellence: A brilliant idea but...(Mark Priestley and SarahMinty)

This is an early evaluation of the impact of the Scottish Curriculum of Excellence. The Humanities AOLE teachers were asked to reflect on this article and discuss a series of questions.

Approaches to specifying curriculum areas of learning (Mark Priestley)

WG have commissioned Mark Priestley to write this paper. The Humanities AOLE teachers were asked to reflect on this article and discuss a series of questions

The Welsh Curriculum Review: Developing a Curriculum Framework (Eleanor Rawling)

WG have commissioned Eleanor Rawling to write this paper and she was present at the meeting to outline her recommendations. She argued that each discipline should identify the big ideas, concepts, skills and processes which were essential to a subject or which define the subject. She asks teachers to identify the '*fundamentals*', the '*core*', the '*key*' aspects or even the '*minimum*'. Teachers should be given curriculum planning criteria as guidance on how to use the big ideas, skills, processes to develop a meaningful curriculum. There should be a national required content outline for the periods between the progression steps in order to ensure some consistency, but that schools should further develop content which was relevant to their locality and school context It would help the 'builders' (the ALE teachers?) to identify 'overlaps' in content, skills and processes. She exemplified her thinking further by outlining what geography was useful/important for a 11 year old/14 year old/16 year old. This detail would also have to promote the 4 Purposes.

Further information:

- Teachers were asked to form subject groups in order to identify one big idea which could be developed like the Science 'Big Ideas'.
- References were made to the CAMAU group which would be responsible for mapping the progression steps and assessment strategies.
- It's likely that external subject experts/academics will undertake some of the responsibilities for writing the 'subject' detail of the new curriculum. MJ suggested that WASACRE could be commissioned to write a paper.
- The Humanities group will meet again on the 6 June 2017. This will be the last meeting for this academic year.

ACTION POINTS for WASACRE and NAPfRE members.

- What are the big ideas of Religious Education? Can we identify the 'minimum' Big Ideas, skills, processes and criteria for selecting components of an RE curriculum? It would be useful to submit some statements similar to the ones noted for Science and exemplify them to show the progression of knowledge and understanding from FP to 16+.